

In Step

A NEWSLETTER FOR ROLE MODELS

Educating Girls and Women for the 21st Century

I recently spoke to status of women and education ministers from across Canada about the study "Educating Girls and Women for the 21st Century: Its Significance to Canada's Economy" which was written by two economists. This paper underscores the importance of mentorship programs like Stepping Stones. Here are excerpts from my speech:

The paper . . . explodes the myth that women are minor economic players. The authors Edward Harvey and John Blakely point out that Canada's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) over the past 20 years was largely attributable to the mass influx of women into the paid workforce.

Most of the more than four million new workers who entered the labour force between 1971 and 1986 were women. And, say Harvey and Blakely, most of the new workers over the next 40 years will be women, too. When I mentioned this to a friend recently, he turned quite pale and said, "Where are all the men going?"

The men are staying right here, of course. But as you know, Canada's low birthrate means our working age population is growing more slowly and will probably decline after the year 2011.

Employers will have to draw on non-traditional sources of labour for new workers. The biggest source will continue to be women, especially women in their 30s and 40s whose participation rate in the workforce is now about 70 per cent. That leaves a large untapped pool of potential workers.

According to projections by Harvey and Blakely, the higher the percentage



of women in the workforce, the greater our economic growth will be. If women were to increase their participation rate to the level of men's our GDP could grow by an extra \$295 billion between now and the year 2036. And if women were to expand their participation into non-traditional fields, our GDP could grow by yet another \$40 billion.

Canada's continued prosperity also depends on the quality of its workforce . . . We need problem solvers. Thinkers. Creators. Inventors. So here we are in a new economy that relies on knowledge, especially in maths, science and technology.

. . . it's important that lots of Canadian girls and women pursue careers in maths and science. So our mission is . . . to open the door to women in non-traditional fields and trades . . . to encourage girls and women to walk through the door.

Elaine McCoy, Q.C.
Minister Responsible for
Women's Issues

Did You Know?

1920: Miss E.M. Hill is the first woman architect in Canada. She received her BASc from the University of Toronto.

1921: Leading occupations for women in 1921 were: clerk, servant, teacher, saleswoman, housekeeper, nurse, dressmaker/seamstress, farmer, textile factory worker or clothing factory worker.

1921: Mercy Ellen Grehan is the first Canadian woman to become a chartered accountant.

1927: Anna Dexter is the first Canadian woman radio broadcaster.

1930: Cairine Wilson is the first Canadian woman to become a Senator; in 1949, she became Canada's first female delegate to the United Nations.

1961: A total of 15.5 per cent of Canadian working women are in the professions. One quarter of 1 per cent of engineers are women, 2.64 per cent of lawyers are women, 4.49 per cent of dentists are women, and 7.33% of the doctors in Canada are women.

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The Balancing Act

Women's roles have drastically changed over the last 30 years. The impact of this change has been felt both in the home and in the workplace, where women's participation now accounts for 45 per cent of the workforce. This change has pushed the issue of balancing work and family responsibilities to the forefront. It is no easy task balancing child care, housework, care for aging parents, educational upgrading, and community obligations with the demands of career.

In a two-part report, *InStep* interviewed four Role Models on how they deal with work and motherhood. For part one, *InStep* spoke with Angela Kokott, a radio news director in Calgary, who was expecting her first child at the time of the interview. She gave birth to a healthy baby boy in November. Sherry Heikel is a mother of one and partner in a Grande Prairie law firm. Part two of the report will feature Leslie Young, an engineer and mother of two; and Charlaire Pare, a biomedical technologist and single parent of three.

Angela Kokott, News Director of CHQR Radio, began her maternity leave just days before her October 25 due date. She will take the 25 week leave now allowed by Unemployment Insurance. Her unusual working hours, five a.m. to 1 p.m., will allow her more time with her baby during the day and will require only part-time childcare. "I am hoping to find someone who can come into our home for the morning," says Angela who considers this the ideal childcare arrangement.

She already faced her first hurdle in the career versus family issue. In the early stage of her pregnancy, she was asked to cover the Winter Olympics for three weeks in February 1992. The games, held in Albertville, fall in the middle of her maternity leave.

"I found out when I was two months pregnant and I thought great, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity, I'm going." She says now she grapples with the logistics of maintaining



Angela Kokott cuddles son, Keldon.

breast-feeding while away and the emotional reality of leaving her baby for three weeks. Travelling to France with her husband and baby is not an option, due to the expense and accommodation difficulties which plague Olympic games. Her boss has encouraged her to apply for accreditation anyway, keeping her option to go open.

Sherry Heikel, a corporate/commercial lawyer and partner, practices in a firm with five men. Her phone interview was lined-up with exuberant baby sounds echoing in the background. Laughing, she says, "what a day to discuss family and work responsibilities. My sitter is sick and Michael is spending the afternoon in my office."

She says she really wasn't sure how she'd feel about returning to work after he was born eight months ago. "After I got over being tired, I started looking forward to returning." She went back to work when he was two-and-a-half months old.

For her, the benefit of being a working parent is that her son has people who are happy to be with him all day long. "For my part, I felt I was lacking a sense of accomplishment being at home. I really needed the intellectual satisfaction that my work provides."

Deciding on childcare, Sherry says, was stressful. She wanted a sitter to come into her home, so she wrote and rewrote newspaper ads, and eventu-

ally interviewed eight applicants. In the middle of one interview, her husband, who practices criminal law, came in when she was asking one candidate if she had a criminal record.

"David thought this was strange and that I was over reacting," she says, laughing. And then she adds, "the next candidate turned out to be a regular at court and someone he had defended."

She finds the biggest issue of balancing work and family responsibilities is the division of household labour. "A friend said, 'you know what your problem is, you can't accept the fact that it isn't fair.' I responded, 'but it still doesn't mean it shouldn't be fair.'"

She says she worried about the effect that new motherhood would put on her productivity. A concern, she believes, that was shared by her partners. A concern, that she found out only after returning to work, was groundless. "I am surprised how organized I have been since I've been back. I'm much more productive than before." She attributes this productivity to a new clarity of goals and the type of law she practices — one that doesn't require the evening work of other disciplines of law.

She cites guilt as the down-side of being a working mother. "I was speaking with a woman justice who also has children and she said the guilt just doesn't go away. Yet, I know I would be unhappy staying at home full-time." She also adds that she has had her moments of anxiety worrying that Michael will become overly attached to the baby sitter. "He fell the other day, when both of us were there. He came to me for comfort and that made me feel good. It reassured me."

Sherry says one thing that would help her to better balance work and family responsibilities would be to have someone take care of the everyday chores, so she could enjoy more time with her family. She finishes, however, by saying, "I have bad days, sometimes bad weeks, but in general I feel like I have a fairy godmother. I have the best of both worlds. A job I didn't realize I enjoyed as much as I did until my maternity leave, and when I finish work, home is where I want to be, with my son and husband."

Sexual Harassment Captures Headlines

It's been a long time since an issue has received such international attention as the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas controversy. Although talk about the specifics of this case has subsided, the issues surrounding sexual harassment have not.

Fil Fraser, Chief Commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC), says that heightened awareness may prompt some Alberta companies and organizations to draft or review their sexual harassment policies.

He adds, "employers and employees are both responsible for ensuring a working environment free from sexual harassment. A solid sexual harassment policy combined with an organizational commitment and an educational program can go a long way to preventing workplace sexual harassment." (See box on sample corporations with their own policies.)

Although men are sometimes harassed by women and same-sex harassment does occur, women are most likely to be the victims. Surveys indicate that approximately 70 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men report having been subjected to unwanted sexual attention at work. More than a nuisance, sexual harassment contravenes human rights legislation.

Gender discrimination is prohibited under every human rights act in the country and in this province, sexual harassment contravenes the *Individual's Rights Protection Act*.

The AHRC defines sexual harassment as unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual favours and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The harassment could range from jokes, touching, nude or pornographic posters, to repeated requests to "socialize."

If you believe you are being sexually harassed, the Commission suggests that you tell the offender the behaviour isn't welcome and report the incident(s) to your

supervisor or manager. You should also keep records of specific incidents, including dates, times and witnesses, if any were present. Confronting the offender is not a prerequisite to filing a complaint. It is suggested, however, because many cases of harassment end when the offender is told to stop.

From April to September of last year, 21 complaints of sexual harassment have been filed with the Human Rights Commission, where complaints are investigated. In the 1990-91 fiscal year, 69 out of 542

complaints filed were sexual harassment, compared to 66 out of 433 complaints the previous year.

In 1987 the Supreme Court of Canada indicated clearly that employers are responsible for the actions of their employees in cases of proven sexual harassment. This decision means that lack of awareness by upper management does not necessarily eliminate a company's liability regarding sexual harassment. The Supreme Court, however, has suggested that a company's liability

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A Modern Tale of Two Cities

The City of Calgary and The City of Edmonton are two examples of corporations that have instituted their own sexual harassment policy as part of their commitment to equal opportunity.

The City of Edmonton first passed an Equal Opportunities Policy in 1976 to ensure employees had a formal channel to voice concerns in the workplace.

Fran Gossel, Equal Opportunities Consultant, believes having its own sexual harassment policy has helped empower City of Edmonton employees. She says, "the policy has created confidence in the individual."

When the first policy was introduced there was concern that the sexual harassment definition would not be clear, thus open to misinterpretation. Ms. Gossel states, however, that there have been no problems defining sexual harassment, and the City of Edmonton has not received complaints about the policy. The City of Edmonton's policy is similar to that of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

"In Calgary, the corporation is very aware of the costs and effects of sexual harassment and has seen a dramatic decrease in complaints since instituting the policy," says

Peter Cresswell, City of Calgary Equal Opportunity Coordinator. The policy was introduced in 1982. The City of Calgary policy closely follows that of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, although the employee must tell the offender that the harassment is unwelcome.

Both corporations conduct mandatory workshops on sexual harassment and have videos and printed material as additional resources. This monumental task involved more than 10,000 employees in each city.

The workshops at both corporations heightened awareness. "Our experience in '84 and '85, when we did our sexual harassment presentation, was that enquiries almost tripled," states Ms. Gossel.

Results for the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary have been a heightened awareness of sexual harassment, well-defined and well-developed policies for preventing it, and a commitment to removing barriers in their workplace. (For further information on these policies contact Fran Gossel, Equal Opportunities Consultant, City of Edmonton, at 428-2658 or Janet Hyde, Training and Education Coordinator, City of Calgary, at 268-8194.)

could be reduced through an effective sexual harassment policy.

The AHRC says that having a comprehensive personnel policy which includes procedures for complaints can assist both employer and employee. Sexual harassment has been shown to have devastating physical and psychological effects on the victim which directly impacts morale and productivity in the workplace. Having an effective sexual harassment policy can make good business sense.

The AHRC also states that senior management must demonstrate their commitment to a sexual harassment policy in order for it to be effective. A clear policy statement should be distributed to all employees and should be posted. The statement should declare that management believes in fair and equal treatment regardless of gender and that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

Employers who have developed their own policies often have expanded the Commission's definition and established specific complaint procedures for employees to follow within their corporate structure.

A sensitive policy can foster an understanding of the true nature of sexual harassment and its destructive consequences. The Commission reminds Albertans that prevention is better than a cure and that education is the key to preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

The AHRC will consult with organizations and offer seminars, free of charge, on developing policies to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace.

If you would like further information or fact sheets (free of charge) on Sexual Harassment, Defining Sexual Harassment, Sample Sexual Harassment Policy, Complainant's Guide, or Respondent's Guide, please call the Alberta Human Rights Commission at 427-7661 (Edmonton), 297-6571 (Calgary) or 1-800-432-1838 (within Alberta).

Wise Women Support One Another

In 1869, Louisa May Alcott wrote that helping each other is the religion of our sisterhood. If that is the case, a group of women at the University of Calgary are devout believers. Through the support group Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), they have been helping each other continue in sciences and engineering, faculties which traditionally have been male-dominated.

WISE, an entirely student-run organization, began two years ago and today has 120 paid members. A significant part of WISE is Connections, a mentorship program, which facilitates discussion and support for undergraduate and graduate students.

"We were concerned about the number of women who drop out of science," says Penelope Codding, Professor of Chemistry and of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, and also a founding member of WISE.

Ms. Codding adds, "we created the kind of networking women do outside of work, inside work. A 'young girls network' as opposed to an 'old boys network'."

When Connections began in January, 1990, 120 people were clustered into 14 groups of common-interest areas, each under the guidance of a group leader. Ten groups ran successfully, meeting anywhere from once-a-week to once-a-month. The success of these groups has been credited, in part, to the influence of the leaders who nurtured the groups into viable, dynamic units.

There is no set place where the groups meet. For example, some groups meet on campus in a coffee shop. Others at the bar. One group in particular met at a jazz festival and a folk festival, played snooker and attended dinner theatre together.

Many topics are discussed such as options after a degree, balancing career and family, job hunting, resume writing, sexual harassment, career options, and departmental policies

which directly impact women. In addition, lecturers speak at monthly meetings on a myriad of topics.

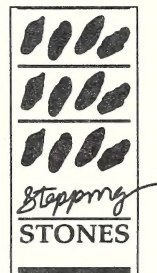
The program is well supported, morally and financially, by the University President, the Dean of Science, other faculties and an Alberta Technology, Research and Telecommunications grant.

Ms. Codding believes the most important part of Connections is "it tells graduates and undergraduates that science wants them; that science is a welcoming place."

Couldn't Say it Better!

"You should either have children when you are very young or very old. That way you get either energy or patience. You can never have both?"

Jane Pepina, first woman Police Commissioner of Metropolitan Toronto, quoted by Joanne Philpott in *The Globe and Mail*, Dec. 6, 1984.



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We invite your comments, suggestions and story ideas.

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